

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: FILE MMM
RE: VISIT TO PORTON
DATE: 1 FEBRUARY 1985

In connection with a recent trip to England, I was invited to visit the Chemical Defense Establishment at Porton Down November 27 and 28. I gave a lecture on "Yellow Rain" and consulted with people working on the problem there.

1. Porton noted pollen in Yellow Rain samples in January, 1982. I think they were the first to do so. They have subsequently examined numerous samples of yellow spots and powders said to have been gathered at sites of chemical attack in Southeast Asia. All such samples were found to be predominantly pollen. The people at Porton believe that the samples are honeybee feces.

2. Porton has developed an excellent analytical capability for trichothecenes, using capillary gas chromatography - medium resolution mass spectrometry. They find that great precautions must be taken to rule out false positives. For example, glassware blanks are run before and after each analysis and any apparently positive results are checked with a different chromatograph matrix material. It is my impression that Porton has been unable to confirm American reports of trichothecene mycotoxins in environmental and biomedical samples from alleged attacks. They do not rule out the possibility that these reports resulted from contamination.

3. It is my impression that a report on these matters has gone to the MOD Science Advisor, Richard Norman, and to higher levels of HMG.